



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1880-02-01

Letter from John Muir to Louie [Strentzel], 1880 Feb .

John Muir

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I was as glad to get out of it
as out of the foul, vulgar, steaming
atmosphere loaded almost to the
dead-point with Carbonic Acid.

Next day dined with Roman & Upham
at the Bohemian Club-rooms. Roman
& Samers begged me to write something
for the "Californian", promising to
pay, & urging the righteousness of writing
for & encouraging a home journal
etc. Then I chanced to meet Pixley
on the street & he too wanted writing for
the Argonaut, ten letters long or short,
at ten dollars each or as much more as I thought
fair. This from him was complimentary,
but I urged engagements with Bulletin.
However I promised a bunch of facts on lack
of government in Alaska which he said
he would put together & fill out with his own
reflections etc.

Yesterday fell into the hands & tender
mercies of the tailors. Escaped unscathed.

In the evening came up here, John declaring
he must have a weeks visit. 00883

At John Swells,
Wednesday night,
Feb, 1888.

Dear Lavinia I'm still
drifting, & unsettled, & homesome,
in this big broader wilderness
of tanneries, I had made up my
mind to shut myself up & bend
my mind to work until I felt better.
but I have been pulled about &
done nothing save a dozen letters
or so of the common correspondence
kind. Had a good warm hearty time
with Sam, though toned down a little
on my part by the presence of ex-
-mayor Alvord who wanted to meet me.

They enquired very kindly about you
all, & Mrs Williams showed me a lot of
colored vine leaves carefully pressed which
she said had belonged to a box of beautiful
grapes you had sent.

Next day Alvord drove me to the
park & showed me through the grounds

+ greenhouses. They are doing a very good work out there in the land. Mr Alford then introduced me to the Pacific club, & gave me a paper conferring the privilege of reading, loafing, smoking, in the rooms for one month from date!

Then I called into the realty office, alias Real Estate Office of Magee. When, for the moment neglecting business, he enquired very pointedly when I had so suddenly vanished to that day. Had I been examining cherry buds about the Martinez hills, etc. I answered by telling him to give ear to the most astounding statement ever uttered on this coast since the Glacial Period, & all about himself. He then loosened his grip on me, & listened with his lips wide apart while I told him that a lady of remarkable discrimination up there in that cherry region gave it as her opinion that he was

handsome! Then go far to that woman, she is the first really sensible woman judge of masculine beauty I have ever heard of in my life. Many & long & weary are the years that I have been seeking that recognition of beauty from the sex that to me of right belongs. Now I have found it & may die in peace.

After escaping from this whirlwind of dusty chaff that was far from pleasing to me I went to seek Mrs Black, who used to be kind to me in my early beginning days in Yosemite Valley, having learned that she was about to leave the city for her home in the mountains above Coulterville. Dined with her & the friends with whom she was stopping. Then they begged me to go with them to hear Clara Morris dying at the Baldwin Theatre, & I went. Her acting was very good, but the play - "Alice", or "Dixie", has very little or no good healthy sentiment in it.

Tomorrow evening I have to dine
with the Payots.

Next day, or Saturday perhaps I am
to set off with that handsome Magee
on an excursion to Tahoe according
to some old promise I had made him.
The Sacramento people want a lecture
(the Literary Society) at least so says
Mr Minus who delivered one there last
week. Probably I shall make that long-
delayed Chico visit while I am up that
way. A' that & a' that, & Alack! What
is a body to do? John too wants me to
go with him to the hills above San Jose
to look at land he thinks of buying, near
Norton's. I what will be left of the new
winter months for work on the other
side of all this.

The day I left you seemed intensely
light & beautiful, & notwithstanding my
dazed half awake condition I noticed some
telling glacial phenomena as the train glided
along the curves of the bay that I had not seen
before. Mt Diablo stood out from one

point in clear relief & the ice-sculpture on the north from the action of small residual glaciers that had lingered in the shadows was plainly manifest. The erosion too of the straits across the edges of the upturned edges of stratified rocks was very apparent, & pleased me very much. It is one of the advantages of travel that one sees better any particular locality & all it contains within reach, For all the different portions of our beautiful world shed light on one another just as do the different chapters of a fine harmonious poem.

This sunny reviving weather is feeding the unborn leaves & blossoms, & how grand a development there will be in a few days. Your Mother too will be well. The Snells & Uphams enquired anxiously about her. Write as soon as you get this.

No 2 fear it would not reach me in time.

The sweetest of the wee wee hours is at hand.

Good night. Heaven bless you all.

00883

Ever truly Yours (M).

At John Swett's,
Wednesday night,
Feb., 1880.

Dear Louie,

I'm still drifting, and unsettled, and lonesome, in this big trodden wilderness of tameness. I had made up my mind to shut myself up and bend my mind to work until I felt better, but I have been pulled about and done nothing save a dozen letters or so of the common correspondence kind. Had a good warm hearty time with Sam, though toned down a little on my part by the presence of ex-mayor Alvord, who wanted to meet me. They enquired very kindly about you all, and Mrs. Williams showed me a lot of colored vine leaves carefully pressed which she said had belonged to a box of beautiful grapes you had sent. Next day Alvord drove me to the park and showed me through the grounds and greenhouses. They are doing a very good work out there in the sand. Mr. Alvord then introduced me to the Pacific Club, and gave me a paper conferring the privilege of reading, loafing, smoking, in the rooms for one month from date!

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[Letter of John Muir to Mrs. Muir, Feb., 1880, continued]

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Ever truly yours,

J. M.